1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

that it was the same baby because of the child's resemblance to the one that had died, which proved that the father's dream was true. 775 787

In 1898 Spencer and Gillen published their book, *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, in which they declare, "We have amongst the Arunta, Luritcha and Ilparra tribes, and probably also among others, such as the Warramunga, the idea firmly held that the child is not the direct result of intercourse, that it may come without this, which merely, as it were, prepares the mother for the reception and birth also of an already formed spirit child who inhabits one of the local totem centers. Time after time we have questioned them on this point and always received the reply that the child was not the direct result of intercourse." This is in reference to the opinion that among the natives of central and northern Australia there is no knowledge of physiological conception and that they believe impregnation of a woman to be entirely due to spiritual causes. Spencer and Gillen rather insisted on this fact because many of the whites of Australia believe that the natives practice the rite of subincision in the attempt to prevent conception. This operation is found throughout a large part of Australia; Spencer and Gillen rightly point out that it has nothing to do with birth control practices. 114

I was in very intimate contact with the Murngin natives. During my first eight or nine months among them I was firmly convinced that the people had no understanding of physiological conception and believed in the spiritual impregnation of a woman by a totemic child spirit. All the fathers told me their children had come to them in dreams as totemic souls, or in some extra-mundane experience, and asked that their mothers be pointed out to them. The men had complied with the request of the children, who had entered the vaginas of the mothers. During all this time, although I was in constant relationship with a large number of the men and there was practically no taboo on our conversations, which were of the most intimate nature, I could find no indication of any knowledge whatsoever of physiological conception; yet in the study I was making of the people, while looking at the problem from the point of view of the "total situation," that is, considering the whole of the culture, there were strong indications that the natives understood the true nature of the father's physical function. 842 123 114

The second time I entered the area I determined to go into this matter further, since the people I studied were but an extension of the central tribes on which Spencer and Gillen had reported. An occasion

1:Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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arose in which I could inquire directly of certain old men just what the semen did when it entered the uterus of a woman. They all looked at me with much contempt for my ignorance and informed me that "that was what made babies." I had not been able to obtain this information earlier because the ordinary savage is far more interested in the child's spiritual conception, which determines its place in the social life of the people, than he is in the physiological mechanism of conception. He would far rather talk about ritual and myth than about ordinary mundane affairs. The relationship between the primitive men of northeastern Arnhem Land and me as a field worker would be the same as that between the colonial Puritans of Massachusetts and the traditional visitor from Mars. Had the latter asked Cotton Mather or any other member of the community "where babies came from," he would have discovered that they came from heaven, that God sent them, and that it was the special duty of the church to look out for them. He might have been told that the stork brought them, and discovered totemic "spiritual conception." He would have been told this for approximately the same reason that the ordinary anthropological field investigator is informed by the natives that the totemic spirit is what causes impregnation.

I know it is dangerous to assume that, because the tribes I studied knew about physiological conception, the people Spencer and Gillen investigated had similar knowledge. I do feel, though, the necessity of throwing doubt upon the validity of the conclusions reached by Spencer and Gillen and others who claim there is no knowledge of physiological conception among certain savage tribes. I think that possibly this knowledge does exist but is not considered important, the spiritual conception of the child looming so large in native thinking that the field worker obtains nothing but facts concerning the latter.[11]

When a man dies he goes straight to his narra well. He is taken there by his marikmo (paternal grandfather). He never comes back but always remains a spirit. Usually a Murngin who is about to die, particularly if severely wounded in a spear fight, dances his death dance, which is symbolical of the ceremonial actions of his totem. This is to send his spirit back to his ranga well.

"We can drink that narra water; we can see the bottom of the well.

[11] This point perhaps has been labored by me, but a large number of sociological and anthropological theories have been built out of the idea that there are many savage peoples who are ignorant of the facts of procreation. It is time some check be placed upon such speculation until further proof is accumulated by field workers.

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 O117 Muragin O117

(iv) SHEETS OF BARK

The bark sheets were stripped from one of the local stringy-barks (*Eucalyptus tetradonta*). After having selected a tree of a size suitable for his purpose, and one free from knots and cracks, the aboriginal first made two cuts round the circumference of the tree, usually about three feet apart, then, loosening a strip of bark at the lower cut, pulled it upward, leaving a narrow vertical opening. Into this opening the native inserted the point of a sharpened stick, and gently levered the bark from the tree. The whole operation usually occupied about three minutes. The aboriginal then threw the bark, rough outer surface downward, on a large fire for a short time, after which he stripped off the outer fibrous bark until the inner denser portion was about three-sixteenths of an inch thick. In this condition the bark, being particularly flexible, was easily flattened by levelling a patch of sand, placing the bark on top, covering it with more sand, and leaving it until dry. The drying took several days to a fortnight, depending on the humidity of the atmosphere. Normally, these bark sheets were used for building the wet-weather shelters (Pl. 3A) on the inside of which the aborigines spent much of their spare time painting pictures.[47]

The method which I adopted was to ask the men to make bark paintings for me, seldom suggesting a subject. At the end of the day, the artists brought their work to my tent, related the associated myth, and explained the meanings of the designs. Under normal tribal conditions, most of the bark paintings are the result of idle hours, when the artist depicts subjects in which he is most interested. But this is not always so. In the Milingimbi and Oenpelli areas, the old men paint designs on sheets of bark which illustrate secret totemic myths. These are exhibited to the novitiates during their initiation and age-grading ceremonies.[48]

5. THE ARTISTS

Some writers suggest that only a limited number of aboriginal men are employed as artists.[49] This is not so. All men were willing to and could paint, although, naturally, some are more skilled than others. The men shown on Pl. 4 produced bark paintings that belonged to Groote Eylandt, Yirrkalla, Oenpelli and Liverpool River areas respectively.

Pl. 4B is *Nangapiana* from Groote Eylandt, who with his relatives, *Tutaluru* and *Juliaura*, produced many fine bark paintings. Pl. 21E and Pl. 25B are the work of *Nangapiana*. *Mini-mini*, mentioned by Adam,[50] also made a number of paintings. He did not, however, employ the fine brushwork of *Nangapiana*, although the results were attractive and colourful. Pl. 30C is *Mini-mini's* work.

47. As the supply of prepared sheets of bark at Yirrkalla and Oenpelli became exhausted, I provided the artists with sheets of rough-surfaced dark grey and green paper. The paintings on these sheets of paper can be distinguished in the illustrations by the smooth ground.
48. Warner (1937), p. 318; also p. 224.
49. Adam (1951), p. 163.
50. Adam (1951), p. 164.

It seems then that the Gunabibi (Kunapipi) as Professor Warner saw it after coming through the Rainbarngo and being amalgamated with the Wauwalak, did not necessarily diffuse east to Melville and Arnhem Bays, though the Wauwalak myth may have done so. It is more likely that it spread there up the coast from the Rose River country; ultimately the "distributing" tribe was the same, the Rembaranga (Rainbarngo) and the fusion with the Wauwalak on the upper Goyder may have occurred before the Kunapipi reached Blue Mud Bay. 177 773 796

In 1946, while at Roper River Mission, I was given a detailed myth of the movement of the Mumuna (or Kunapipi group) and the ritual (with no trace of the Wauwalak myth) from Blue Mud Bay south along the coast to the Roper River, which was crossed about thirty miles from its mouth, and shortly after, a Wadiri-Anyula man gave me an account of the journey of *Gilyeri-gilyeri mara-ahana*, the Travelling Woman, from the Roper, near the junction of the Limmen, and of the spread of the ritual, through the Alawa and on and on to Lake Woods and Newcastle Waters. Here the ritualists linked up with the route of diffusion from the Lower Victoria River through the Mudbara tribe and by Battle Creek. [115]

This, incidentally, completed the circle of the Kunapipi route, for a study of the rituals and myths and traditions show that it also spread from the Victoria River east through the Wadman, Yangman and Mangarai territory and thence north to the Rembaranga, and on to Blue Mud Bay, and thence, as we have seen, south to the lower Roper, and so on to Newcastle Waters.

At the present time, too, some of the Kudjika songs of the Kunapipi of the Roper River side, which I heard at the Elsey, are on their way south-west through Warlock Ponds and then eventually to Wave Hill, west of Newcastle Waters, and on even to Wyndham, that is, to East Kimberley. [533]

The doctrines are still very real to the initiated Mangarai, whom I have come to know during the past three years. We talk about the myth or ritual; we mention the sacred key and pass words referring to the "Mother", the bullroarer, the Yalmanindji, the "river" and "billabong" (womb) on the ritual ground, or we repeat the words of the chants: but let anyone pass by even thirty yards away and out of earshot—the subject is dropped immediately, until that person has really gone by. And how interesting it is to hear on the Roper almost the same ritual words as obtain at Yirrkalla, and then to hear them again from Djauan and southern Rembaranga and others on the Mainoru, south of Bulman Gorge, and 100 miles west again not far from the Waterhouse! When I arrived at the latter place in September, 1948, a Kunapipi ritual had been completed only a few days before. I saw the headman and others who participated. There, too, was the Kanalina and the Anggorna (Nanggoru) with the 773 796 171 [123]

which then has to be quickened. The coastal Arnhem Landers have had centuries of contact, and it may be that the usually accepted Aboriginal doctrine of conception has been modified here. In any case, granting the premises, the form in which they hold it is eminently logical. 114 842 796

Amongst the many other interesting points raised by the author is the vital significance of dreams, particularly for ritual and its interpretation. One of Mr. Berndt's important contributions to the anthropology of northern Arnhem Land is his systematic recording of dreams—a sign of the confidence put in him by the natives, and also a sign of the objectivity with which they regard dreams. 114 123 787

One last point: Mr. Berndt lays stress on the importance of the ritual rôle played by women in this region. He is correct in doing so. Though they are not on the "Mother Place", yet they are nearby playing their part, a part which stems from the Dreamtime, when the sacred ritual was theirs; and how else could it be, for life and birth is through the womb? A cult of the Great Mother would have no foundation apart from the women through whom her children must be born. Women here have their sacred aspect and sacred rôle. 114 562 796

The Author and the Field

Mr. R. M. Berndt was well equipped for doing research into the religion of Arnhem Land. After study in the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney, he with his wife (Catherine H. Berndt), also an Anthropologist, did four years of field research amongst Aborigines in both tribal and detribalized conditions. This included about eighteen months on the south-west of Arnhem Land and on the border of the Kimberley Division of Western Australia, where he was introduced to the cult. In 1946 when the Australian National Research Council was able to make a further grant to these workers, we selected the north-eastern corner of Arnhem Land as the main field. Research there would be complementary to what Dr. Warner had done eighteen years before; in addition it was an area subject to the spread of native customs and rites from both the west and the south, and was also likely to show some cultural effects arising from long contact with Macassans or others who visited the region to engage in marine industry. Finally, although a Mission had been operating at Yirrkalla for nearly ten years and an Air Force base had been established there during the war, causing some modification of native life, in particular, lessening the degree of nomadism, yet in spite of this, the fundamental drives and beliefs had not been affected. Men in the prime of life as well as the old men still belonged to the "old order". It was, therefore, still possible to study the native religion in its cultural and social setting as a functioning institution. Fortunately, I was able to assure myself of this during a visit and inquiries in the region in 1946. 114 121 [122] [797] [177]

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

123 Mr. and Mrs. Berndt on their part had proved their capacity to obtain the confidence of the Aborigines, to be admitted into the "inside" life of the men and women respectively, and to work in the native language. These three qualifications are essential for a study of a subject so intimate as a religious cult with its many personal and social ramifications.

With regard to the language it should be emphasized that more is required than ability to use it only as a phrasebook tool for asking questions, or to record slowly long texts. It is necessary to follow the ritual songs as they are chanted, and the discussions on doctrine and ritual. Fortunately, previous linguistic research in the region had been done by Dr. A. Capell of this Department, and the Methodist Missions at both Millingimbi and Yirrkalla had been using the local related dialects for some years. The general principles of the language and a reasonable vocabulary were known. Armed with this knowledge together with much field experience, and living for nearly twelve months quite close to the native camp, a remarkable degree of proficiency was obtained. In this type of work, the result of the efforts of two persons is more than desirable.

I have emphasized this point so that readers will know that the book is truly first hand work. Unfortunately, native opinions and interpretations could not be given in the Aboriginal language for the printing cost would be prohibitive, but some of them will be published elsewhere. I have, however, discussed with the author all the statements and interpretations attributed to native informants, and the translations of texts, and am satisfied that we are presented with a reliable record of intelligent native thought and belief. Mr. Berndt's own opinions are only expressed, and then sparingly, at the conclusion of chapters, and in the final chapter. Also, Mr. Berndt was able to check with his wife the women's attitude to, and part in, the ritual, and their knowledge of doctrines. Only a woman worker can observe and inquire into this satisfactorily. Mrs. Berndt, therefore, provides a further assurance of the reliability of this record.

For these reasons, as well as for my own special interest in the subject matter and in the region and because of my close association with Mr. Berndt in his anthropological research, I commend this book. It is a most important contribution to our knowledge of Australian Aboriginal religion, a contribution which will be increased by a study of the Djanggawul cult, now in process, which, like the Wauwalik, preceded the Kunapipi in north-east Arnhem Land.

Department of Anthropology,
University of Sydney.
June 24, 1949.

A. P. ELKIN.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

CHAPTER VI

KUNAPIPI DREAMS

Kunapipi ritual and ideology, like all other aspects of native life and thought, find expression through the medium of dreams. The study of these requires not only personal acquaintance with the individuals whose dreams are recorded, but also sound knowledge of their cultural and traditional background. Their behaviour patterns must be compared with those of other representatives of the group; all social factors likely to contribute towards a particular dream should be analysed, and the individual's personality and psychological approach taken into consideration. In addition, the natives' own theory and interpretations of dreams must be considered. 121

For several months, at Yirrkalla, the dreams of a number of adult males were recorded daily. During the initial period of field-work, it was necessary to have approximately thirty male informants, each chosen for some specific reason; one was a headman of a certain linguistic group, another an artist, a wood-carver, a song-man, a leader of the Djanggawul or of the Kunapipi rituals, and so on. With such a group readily available it was convenient to record their dreams each morning while studying their social background. At the same time an intimacy grew up between the field-worker and the informants, so that mental reservations were reduced to a minimum. Detailed case-histories of each individual were compiled over the period of work, and the sequence of events within the social group was observed in relation to their dreams; these events were apparently modified or accentuated according to a man's peculiar background and associations. What had begun as a tentative experiment developed into an important aspect of study, which revealed the natives' psychological adjustment to their society under the impact of Misson and European contact. However, it was found necessary after a certain period to restrict the time spent on this work, since it had shown a tendency to dominate, and even in part to exclude, other aspects of equal if not greater importance. 124 [115] [123] [177]

It was however of great value to have this opportunity of studying hundreds of dreams, recorded in sequence, of a number of these aborigines, and to observe the wide range of subjects concerned, together with the themes which reflected each man's particular 124 159 787

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
OI17 Murngin OI17

language. Their society is constructed on the moiety principle, and descent is in all cases primarily patrilineal. There is no clearly defined tribe, but a series of linguistic groups associated with clans; all of these may be called, collectively, the Wulamba bloc of the Miwaitj language group (referring to the sum total of the different dialects). Yirrkalla is situated on the extreme north-east corner of Arnhem Land between Melville Bay and Cape Arnhem, and Aborigines gather there from places as far distant as Blue Mud and Caledon and Trial Bays, Rose River, and Woodah and Groote Islands in the south and south-east, and Arnhem and Buckingham Bays, Elcho, English Company and Wessel Islands in the north-west. Milingimbi is in the Crocodile Island group on the central-north coast; it is also a meeting place for members of many groups, particularly those from the mainland around the Blyth, Goyder and Woolen Rivers.

Virtually all the writer's field work has been carried out through the medium of the native language, both at Yirrkalla and Milingimbi. Knowledge of local dialects is essential in social anthropological work, and particularly in a study of Aboriginal religion. Field work at Yirrkalla was carried out in 1946–7 and at Milingimbi in 1950 (a total period of thirteen months actually working on the field in this particular region); the first period was made possible by grants from the Australian National Research Council, and was under the auspices of the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney, while the latter period was financed by grants from the Research Committee of the University of Sydney and the Department of Anthropology of the same University. Writing up of this material was also made possible by grants from the Research Committee.

So many informants have helped in the process of collecting the data presented here that a list of their names would be tiresome and meaningless to the reader. Not only main *dua* moiety headmen, but also those of the *jiritja* moiety, contributed; and these were members of many linguistic groups. In addition, attitudes of local Aboriginal women towards this religious cult were discussed with them by my wife (Catherine Berndt), and this aided directly the analysis of certain sections. This study of the Djanggawul, then, does not express solely the information and attitudes of male natives, but takes into account both male and female elements in the culture. The practice in recording the interlinear phonetic renderings of the songs was for informants belonging to a particular area through which the Djanggawul passed to put forward those songs themselves, for it was their country and they were expected to have more complete knowledge of the songs. In this way, each

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943)1949
OI17 Murngin OI17

by repeated intervention of the Australian Customs Authorities after Federation. The Indonesian influence in Arnhem Land, therefore, probably extended over a period of nearly two hundred years, perhaps much longer. Although there is no conclusive evidence as to the time when these visits commenced, there is reason for the belief that they occurred over a relatively long period, and a study of the culture shows that the visitors from Indonesia exercised a strong influence on the people. This is apparent in their material culture, and to an even greater extent in their social and ceremonial life and mythology. I have mentioned (page 71, footnote) my surprise at finding in settled country on the Roper River, even before I entered the then isolated country of Arnhem Land, fine iron spear heads from Blue Mud Bay, an area where iron was still difficult to obtain and much coveted. The natives of this region have been suspected of attacking *bêche-de-mer* and other craft merely for the iron in the water tanks and trepang boilers, from which, by a laborious process of hammering and grinding, they manufacture fine spear heads. This was in 1935, when I had been sent by the Commonwealth Government to investigate unrest and tribal fighting in Arnhem Land. The people of Caledon and Blue Mud Bays were regarded as warlike and aggressive and were still greatly feared by the natives to the south, with whom they had little contact and who would not have entered their territory.

Subsequent work in Arnhem Land revealed the existence of the great ceremonial exchange cycle which has been described in detail on page 67 above. But while the *kumur märnda* relationship exists throughout the whole of Arnhem Land, and while the ceremonial exchange cycle draws *gerri* from far beyond this region, there is evidence for the belief that it was the visits of Macassar voyagers, who

10: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1958
OI17 Murngin OI17

I called to Mahkarolla, "What shall we do?" He said nothing. He did not so much as glance back. I called his name. He paid no attention. I wondered if he were sulking. This seemed unlike him, but most Murngin occasionally sulk and I wondered if he might feel that I had brought him into this very dangerous situation and blame me for it. With the foolish hope that it might be possible for us to get back to safety, I yelled again and asked if it were necessary for us to go on. He ignored me. After several more futile attempts to get his attention and some profane comment I subsided. There was complete silence in the boat.

Hours went by. Everyone remained quiet. I felt isolated and alone. The sun had gone down behind a bank of red clouds. In many of the Murngin ceremonies red clouds are a symbol of the end of things. The sea had turned blood red, ugly and morbid.

Darkness came, and with the night the waves quieted and the wind lessened. About midnight we came to a desert island lying a few hundred yards off the shore. The island was formed like a semicircular hill with one small beach at the bend. We saw a campfire on the beach and were afraid to land because the coastal and bush peoples had been fighting. Marauding bands from the interior had been coming down to the coastal country. We drew closer and discovered the party to be Murngin—the other canoe had landed safely.

Everything I had with me was soaked through except my camera and photographic material which, fortunately, were in waterproof bags. Mahkarolla and I with the others sat by the fire to dry and warm ourselves. We dried out enough tobacco to have a smoke. Mahkarolla turned to me and then said, "I am very sorry I did not answer you when you called to me, Bungawa. I could not because I was crying too much. I was afraid you were going to lose your life. I thought those waves were going to tip our canoe over and you would die. I am very sorry."

I tried to answer him. All my words seemed inadequate. However, even in my shame I knew he understood my feelings because he had once said that when white men swore they did not mean what they said. After we had had some food and what little water was left in my canteen we hovered around the fire and went to sleep.

When I left the Murngin country I took the mission lugger from the Crocodile Islands to Port Darwin to get the boat to Sydney. Mahkarolla came with me. I had to wait ten days for the boat and during this time he and I were together a good part of each day. When the boat came in Mahkarolla helped me aboard with my luggage and scientific equipment. Then my white friends in Darwin came aboard for a farewell whiskey and

10: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1958
OI17 Murngin OI17

soda. Natives were not allowed to stay on board. When I realized we were about to sail I rushed out to find Mahkarolla. The pier was filled with Darwin whites who were there to feel in touch with the homeland. Out at the far corner of the crowd I saw Mahkarolla. He was standing still, his head bent down. I waved but he did not reply. I called to him but received no answer. There came to my mind the memory of the storm at sea when he thought I was going to lose my life. Our parting now had death in it, too, because it was certain that we would never see each other again. I hurried down to the other end of the boat to be nearer him to try to attract his attention. The whisle blew and we started to leave the pier. I called again. Mahkarolla looked up, waved, then lowered his head again. He was crying. That was the last time I saw him.

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cannibalism which they regarded as indispensable to a hunter in order to maintain his prowess at a level that could earn for him the coveted title of *tjambait*.

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During much of the time—amounting to several years—that I lived in Arnhem Land I hunted with groups of the status of horde, which often claimed one or more *marrngitmirri*. I frequently saw these men practising their cult, and was able to make a detailed study of both *marrngitmirri* and *kalka* while I lived a nomadic life with these people.

Kalka *and* Marrngit

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The cult of the *ragalk* or *kalka*—*kalk*' of the Burara—, to which I have referred, is believed to be used to bring about the death of a man who has been made a scapegoat—frequently by a rite of augury—for the death of a member of an enemy horde. Often the victim will be a man against whom the deceased or his group have harboured a grievance of long standing, perhaps because he has failed to honour some payment such as that obligatory to one who has been present at a *ngarra*—or clan totem—ceremony, to make a ceremonial presentation of *ngata*, food (really vegetable food), or of *gerri*, goods, valuables, to the elders of this clan. Of this obligation they say 'to pay back that *marr*'—to propitiate the *malli* of the culture hero whose totem is involved. This *ngata* and the *gerri* presented by men who have attended the *ngarra* by invitation, are dedicated to the *wangarr* and are said to be *yarkomirri*, *i.e.* sacramental. Failure to discharge the obligation to make expiatory payments of the kind that I have mentioned places a man in danger of death by magic, even after a long period of time.

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In Arnhem Land the belief is held that the death of any person in full possession of his social personality is due, not to what the white man terms 'natural causes' but to the act of an enemy, often a person who is believed to bear a grudge, real or imaginary, against the deceased. Even death from sickness or drowning, from attack by shark or crocodile, and especially from snake bite, is not regarded as the primary cause, but merely the agent used by an enemy, or by a *ragalk* whose aid he has enlisted, to bring this about. The only exception to the belief about natural death is extreme old age, when, in the words of one of my informants, the people say 'time belong him now'—his time is spent, he has lived his life. Certain types of swellings and deformities are believed to result from ritual visitation or punishment by the *wangarr*, the totemic ancestors, for the violation, even accidental or inadvertent, of a tabu, particularly on the eating of foods which are prohibited at certain critical stages in a man or woman's relation to his family or horde, as at initiation, on the death of near kin, or during pregnancy. Boils of a type distinguished as *marlung* are believed to be due to ritual punishment and so held as proof of the violation of a tabu, usually on the eating of food that is *duyu* (tabu) at critical stages in a man's life.

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A man in east Arnhem Land named Nyarrang pointed to a large tumour on his neck and told me that it was due to the *malli birlma*—*i.e.* a blow from the 'shade' or spirit of an implement called *birlma*—used today as a mallet or hammer in food-preparation by women, and 'found'

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

humus are swept into the swamps or out to sea. The residue from this fierce erosion is the typical clay, gravel, and stone of Arnhem Land. Nevertheless, with the first cloudbursts, the harassed country makes an astounding recovery. In an incredibly short time a thick growth of high coarse grass covers the rocky hills and sandy valleys, yams spring to life on gravel slopes, and animal and bird life is rejuvenated; red kangaroos, agile wallabies, opossums, mice, snakes, goannas, emus, jungle fowls, ducks, geese, spoonbills, herons, brolgas, and many more in kind grow fat and lazy from the lavish hand of nature. But the vicious circle is not to be avoided. Winds swing back to the south-east and the nightmare of poverty again creeps over the land.

Exploring in the north-east brought us into contact with most of the scattered hordes so frequently referred to as the 'Killers of Arnhem Land'. In early September we were in the English Company's Islands, with the crew on the look-out for Yulengor; and when they saw a thin column of smoke on a beach, conjecture was rife as to who was in the camp. A dozen men and boys paddled out in their big dug-out canoes and came aboard somewhat diffidently. However, they were soon squatting round the hatch exchanging news with the crew, all the time passing the one and only bush pipe backwards and forwards and drawing deeply the first tobacco smoke they had tasted for months. Most of them were strong and well developed, with bushy hair, but not too clean. As a concession to the white man they had donned strips of bark on string waistbands. They were reserved, but interested in all we did, and gladly accepted a couple of tomahawks, wire for fish-spears, and fish-hooks.

After the visitors had cast-off in their canoes, a crew-boy mentioned that our visitors had just returned from killing a man in revenge for the death of another in the hills behind our anchorage. It was a long story of intrigue and murder,

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OII7 Murngin OII7

disease, scarcity of food compels the occupants to look for fresh sites. 364

Well-defined tracks link food-gathering areas and meander in or around jungles and along swamps and creeks wherever there is good hunting. Accompanied by a couple of aboriginal families and a few boys, I followed one of these tracks for about forty miles to where a distant horde had migrated. 487 Men went ahead with their spears, and the women followed with young children, family possessions, and food-gathering dilly-bags. 484 Every little while there was an outbreak of squealing from the women and yelping from the dogs, as a bush rat or other animal was dragged from a hollow log or tree. [224] Occasionally a woman darted off from the track and some miles farther on rejoined the party with a bundle of edible roots or yams. [222]

By sundown we left the bush and came out on a sandy beach on the northern shores of Port Bradshaw, and men and boys were soon lying on the sand waiting for the women to prepare the camps, dig in the sand for fresh water, and cook the shellfish. [462] [312] [264] Once the food was ready, the women took it to their husbands, who shared it with unmarried companions. Darkness comes quickly in the north, and married men settled down with their wives and children around their separate family fires, whilst the unattached males discreetly camped some distance away. 361 589 Unmarried men always separate themselves from family groups, and any visiting males temporarily without wives stay with the bachelors. Not infrequently married men determine where the bachelors' camp is to be made, and with vivid memories of their own youthful and indiscriminate ways, rigorously enforce this segregation. In the bush, ever-courteous nomads reserved a place for me beside the young men's fire, but never anywhere near a family group, although the youths have sometimes been strangers and the married families well known to me. [123]

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

the nomad's continuous thought and consideration in breaking branches, waiting at waterholes till the white man drinks first, breaking twigs for him to sleep on, and offering him the choicest parts of their scanty food. When the track has led through mangrove swamps they have paused on the edge of the mud and apologized for having led me into the mess; their solicitations have been embarrassing, and they have offered to carry me through the slime and tangled roots. 609

Early one morning two Yulengor left with me on a launch to take medical aid to a horde about thirty miles from Yirrkala. Shortly afterwards the engine gave trouble, and after I had set this right a spark escaped from the magneto cable and ignited petrol fumes in the cabin and exploded the fuel. In a few moments the boat was hopelessly ablaze from stem to stern and we had to dive overboard to extinguish the flames on our limbs and clothing. We were then about a mile from a small rocky island and started to swim toward it, but my knees were badly burnt and I was floundering badly. The boys then closed in and told me to put a hand on either of their shoulders, and in this way they helped me ashore. One boy was uninjured and swam the channel to the mainland for a canoe in which we hoped to make our way home. Whilst he was away the other lad regaled me with stories of several fatal shark attacks, and casually remarked that while I had been tinkering with the engine they had watched a twelve-foot shark cruising round the launch. Aboriginal courage is of the highest order, and their loyalty and devotion are above question. They make no parade of noble and unsuspected qualities, for they are among the natural attributes of the race and are accepted as a matter of course. 123 [577]

After a long patrol, Northern Territory troopers had captured two troublesome nomads and were taking them to jail, but when they were crossing a flooded creek the white men lost their horses and were carried downstream. The 648 577

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BLACK MAGIC

There are no direct methods for stopping a storm, and it is taken for granted that the rain continues as long as the rain-maker wills it. If fine weather is desired it is necessary to intimidate the rain-maker. During protracted stormy weather I developed acute appendicitis, and as the wireless transmitter had been shattered by lightning, we were unable to get medical assistance till five Yulengor, including Mau, volunteered to make a hazardous open-sea trip to the nearest pedal-wireless station one hundred and fifty miles away. Day after day the storms and high seas continued and the canoe was hardly expected to get through. From the time the boys left till the flying doctor arrived, Jirring, who was particularly attached to me, sat by his camp-fire significantly grinding his axe and muttering threats against the misguided rain-maker who had not only manufactured the storms, but now obstinately allowed them to continue.

Another kind of magic belongs to certain localities and it is necessary to perform certain rites at these magic-centres. An old gnarled tree in the Wessel Islands shelters the spirits of octopuses, and peculiar rock formations near Cotton Island are also octopus-spirit centres. If a nomad wishes to harm another he visits either site and instructs a spirit-octopus to enter the victim's body, in an invisible form, or to change into a fish which the victim will catch and eat to his destruction. Two men from Arnhem Bay were killed in the course of a long feud, so their mother went to an octopus centre and sent a spirit to spoil her enemies. She told the octopus-spirit to travel into enemy territory and there change into a large shell-back turtle, to float near the shore, and to remain inactive till caught and eaten: 'And when they eat you, you kill them,' she said. About that time the unfortunate enemy chanced to harpoon an outsize turtle near Port Bradshaw, and ate all they could, without paying attention to the poison glands. Within a few hours